

TOWN HALL ARBORETUM

In 1887, Horatio Hollis Hunnewell gave the young Town of Wellesley 15 acres, on which he constructed a building that housed the Town Hall and the Library. He designed the grounds in the English landscape tradition and established an arboretum around the Town Hall. Hunnewell was an avid horticulturalist and used the Town Hall grounds to test the hardiness of the varieties on which he was experimenting.

The arboretum has grown to 26 acres over the years. Today it includes the library and police station grounds, Morton Park, Simons Park, and Post Office Park. In 1963, the Arnold Arboretum staff conducted an inventory of the trees growing in the arboretum. The inventory was updated by the Wellesley Park and Tree Division in 1985 and every tree was labeled and located on a plan. Today there are 550 trees representing 82 species and varieties. A major feature of the arboretum are its groves of trees. These are groupings of a single species which often contain mature specimens as well as young recently planted trees. This allows visitors to observe the changes that occur in the species as it matures. In addition to the groves, there are many specimen trees in the arboretum that have been growing there since Hunnewell laid out the plantings, including ten Massachusetts Champion Trees. A champion tree is the largest of its species in the state. This takes into consideration not only height, but also the size of the trunk and the spread of the branches. Nine of the Wellesley champion trees are New England Champions as well.

There are also plantings of street trees along the driveways in the Town Hall Park. Hunnewell used the street tree to shade the road, to beautify it and to provide a random planting design in keeping with the other trees in the park. Hunnewell's final design concept was to use plantings as a screen. Views from Town Hall of the railroad tracks and views to some downtown stores have been blocked with plantings of evergreens.

In recent years, the increased number of trees in the arboretum has been mostly through gifts. These new additions include many memorial trees. The memorial trees are planted in keeping with the arboretum master plan and are designated by a label or plaque. Traditionally, the new trees and plantings are dedicated on Arbor Day each year, the last Friday in April.

Arrangements for donating a tree to the arboretum can be made through the Wellesley Park and Tree Division, Department of Public Works, 56 Woodlawn Avenue, Wellesley Hills, MA 02181 or by calling (617)-235-7600.